

XX.—Obituary.

JOHN KIRK.

THE death of Sir John Kirk, G.C.M.G., F.R.S., which took place on the 15th of January last at his home at Sevenoaks, removes from our midst one of the most distinguished of the men of British birth who during the last century opened up the interior of Africa and added large areas of that continent to the British Empire. Though never a member of the Union, he did a good deal of work for ornithology, and it is not meet that his death should pass unnoticed in the pages of 'The Ibis.'

Born in the manse at Barry, near Arbroath in Forfarshire, on the 22nd of December, 1832, he was the second son of the Rev. John Kirk of Arbirlot. He was educated at Arbroath and at Edinburgh University, where he graduated M.D. and L.R.C.S. in 1854. His love of natural history was early developed, and he was already a botanist of considerable note. In 1855 he served for a time under the War Office, and was assistant physician at a hospital at Renkioi on the Dardanelles, to which many of the sick and wounded from the Crimea were sent. In 1858 he was appointed physician and naturalist to Livingstone's second expedition. He soon became Chief Officer under Livingstone and spent five years exploring the lower reaches of the Zambesi, and with his chief was the discoverer of Lake Nyasa and Lake Shirwa, and with him became the founder of the present Protectorate of Nyasaland. He returned home in 1863, and spent some time at Kew identifying and describing his botanical collections. The birds collected during these five years were described by himself in 'The Ibis' (1864, pp. 307-339), while another collection made in the Comoro Islands was enumerated by Dr. P. L. Selater in the same volume (pp. 292-301) and included a number of valuable notes from Dr. Kirk as he then was.

In 1866 Kirk was appointed acting-surgeon to the political

agency at Zanzibar. He soon rose to become Consul-General, and it was through the influence he exercised over the Sultan, Sayyid Bargash, that he became the arbiter and virtual sovereign of the dominions of Zanzibar, which extended over the greater part of eastern Africa. Though he did little more collecting himself, he sent collectors to Lamu, Melindi, Usambara, and Ugogo, and himself again visited the Comoro Islands. The birds obtained on these occasions were worked out by the late Capt. Shelley (Proc. Zool. Soc. 1879, p. 673, and 1881, p. 561). He also assisted in every way the many British travellers and scientific explorers, such as Sir Joseph Thomson, Sir Harry Johnston, and Stanley, who made Zanzibar the base of their operations. His political and antislavery work needs no mention here.

After his retirement in 1887 Sir John Kirk made several other journeys to Africa, the last one on the completion of the Uganda railway, when he was conducted in state up to Lake Victoria, which was only discovered by Speke in the year in which Kirk first went to Africa.

Many honours came to Kirk: he was created G.C.M.G. in 1886, was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1887, and was Foreign Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society from 1894 till 1911, when he resigned at the age of 80. He also received honours from Oxford and Cambridge, as well as from his own University of Edinburgh. Many animals and plants bear his name, which has been attached to birds of the genera *Crateropus*, *Cinnyris*, *Franco-linus*, and *Zosterops* among others.

Of quiet and unassuming manner, Sir John Kirk was none the less a man of firmness and courage. His sense of humour and kindness endeared him to all those who had to do with him, and he will always be remembered as one of the greatest of public servants who have made the name of Englishmen or, better, Scotsmen respected throughout the world.

JOHN BIDDULPH.

The death of Colonel John Biddulph, which occurred on the 24th of December last at Grey Court, Ham Common, in his 82nd year, removes a name very familiar to the Indian ornithologists of the Hume era. He was a member of the Union from 1875 to 1892, when he resigned.

One of a distinguished family, the third son of Robert Biddulph of Ledbury, John Biddulph was educated at Westminster, and at the age of 18 joined the 19th Lancers and proceeded to India in time to serve through the Oude campaign of 1858 and to be awarded the Mutiny medal. He afterwards joined the Political Department under the Government of India. He accompanied the second Yarkand mission of 1873-1874 under Sir Douglas Forsyth and in company with Dr. F. Stoliczka, who was the official naturalist and who unfortunately died during the crossing of the Himalaya on the return of the mission to India.

The Scientific Results of the Mission were published by the Government of India in a series of memoirs. That containing the account of the Birds, owing to Stoliczka's death and other causes, did not appear until 1891. It was prepared by Dr. Bowdler Sharpe, and in it will be found incorporated the MSS. notes of Colonel Biddulph, who collected assiduously both birds and mammals and discovered a new species of that curious genus *Podoces*, allied to the Choughs and confined to Central Asia, to which Hume attached his name. In 1877 Biddulph was posted at Gilgit, the furthermost outpost of India, in the extreme north-western corner of Kashmir. Here with short intervals he remained till 1881 and made very considerable collections of birds. His observations and researches in this remote region are contained in two very valuable papers published in 'The Ibis' (1881, pp. 35-102, and 1882, pp. 266-291), and but little work on birds has been done in the Gilgit region since that date. After holding many posts as Resident at various Native States and serving for four years on the staff of the

Viceroy Lord Northbrook, Colonel Biddulph retired from the service in 1895.

In addition to his natural history tastes, Biddulph was a keen numismatist and had got together a remarkable series of ancient Indian weapons. He was also the author of several works, the result of original research, including 'The Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh,' 'The Nineteenth and Their Times' an account of the four British Cavalry Regiments which have borne that number, and a monograph on 'Stringer Lawrence' known as the father of the Indian Army.

His valuable collection of Indian birds, numbering some 3500 skins including those from Gilgit and Turkestan, were presented by him to the National Collection.

WILLIAM WILLOUGHBY COLE VERNER.

We regret to learn of the death of Colonel Willoughby Verner, which took place at his residence El Aguila, Algeciras, in southern Spain on 25 January last. He was well-known for his knowledge of Spanish ornithology, and became a member of our Union in 1881.

Born in 1852, he joined the Rifle Brigade in 1873 and passed through the Staff College, taking the first place with honours in 1881. He served in the Nile campaign of 1884, was present at Abu Klea, and subsequently at the fighting on Gordon's steamers at Metemneh. He also saw active service in South Africa in 1899-1900, when he was on the staff, and was wounded at Graspan, after which he retired and devoted himself to literary and natural history pursuits, spending much of his time in southern Spain. His book, 'My life among the Wild Birds of Spain,' was published in 1909 and reviewed in 'The Ibis' of the same year (p. 381) at considerable length. Though an excellent sportsman and devoted to shooting and wild-fowling, his bird-work was mostly performed with the telescope and camera, and with a facile pencil he himself illustrated his book with charming drawings. He had a considerable

collection of eggs taken by himself in the sierras and lagunas of Andalucia. Of late years he had devoted himself to the exploration of the palæolithic caves and rock-paintings of Andalucia, and was preparing a report on this subject in collaboration with the well-known Abbé H. Breuil of the Institut de Paléontologie humaine in Paris. He also wrote a good many books on military history, including 'The Military Life of Field-Marshal H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge,' 1905, and the 'History of the Rifle Brigade,' the first volume of which appeared in 1912, and the second so lately as November of last year.

Colonel Verner was a most versatile man. He was an accomplished soldier, a good scholar both in the Portuguese and Spanish languages, a writer of considerable literary charm, an inventor, and an excellent field-naturalist and sportsman.

He married in 1881 the Hon. Elizabeth Mary Emily Parnell, daughter of the third Baron Congleton, who survives him together with a daughter, the widow of Commander Robert Jeffreys, R.N. His only son, Commander Rudolf Verner, R.N., was killed during the war.

Brigadier-General H. R. Kelham, C.B., has sent us the following reminiscences of Colonel Verner:—

"We first met as young subalterns at Gibraltar in 1875, he being there at that time with his regiment, the Rifle Brigade. In those happy days there were no shooting restrictions in Spain; as long as you held a Government Game Permit you could shoot where you liked, so many a good day did we have 'between rivers,' in the Cork Woods or further afield at the Laguna de la Tanda and its snipe-marshes, and well do I remember Verner's delight at our discovering several Grey Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) on the edges of that lagoon.

"His whole life was devoted to birds, even on active service he was always on the look-out for a new bird, as may be seen in his account of how he secured a nest of the Black and Red Weaver-bird while under heavy fire during the Nile Campaign.

“While at the Staff College Verner always seemed to find time for birds, as a fellow-student remarked: ‘While we spend all our time out of lecture hours working like mad, Verner goes off climbing trees after birds’ nests.’

“In fact he was a man of such natural talent and quickness that to him examinations were no terror, and in spite of time spent climbing trees after nests he passed out nearly, if not quite, at the top of the list.

“Very clever with his pencil and a talented surveyor, he served during the early days of the South African War as official topographer, but at the battle of Graspan while galloping over the veld his horse fell and crushed him so badly that he had to be sent home, his injuries eventually resulting in his having to retire from the army.

“After his soldiering, Colonel Verner returned to his first love, Spain, building himself a house at Algeciras where he spent each winter within easy reach of La Tanda and the happy hunting grounds of his youth; here he wrote most of his book: ‘My Life among the Wild Birds of Spain,’ a most interesting record of the life of a gallant gentleman, good sportsman, and enthusiastic ornithologist.”

JOHN PATRICIUS CHAWORTH-MUSTERS.

Mr. Chaworth-Musters died on the 12th of December, 1921, at Annesley, the ancient family seat near Nottingham. He was a member of the Union from 1900 to 1917.

Born in 1860, Mr. Chaworth-Musters was the great-grandson of Mary Anne Chaworth, Byron’s early love and near neighbour. He was educated at Eton and Christchurch, and succeeded to the family estates in 1887 on the death of his father. He was a country gentleman, interested in farming and sport, and an enthusiastic ornithologist. He formed one of the largest private collections of birds’ eggs in the country. He was the father of seven sons and four daughters. Six of his sons served in the war, and three were killed or died of wounds.